

Assurance

Comfort for those struggling with doubt

I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him.
Ecclesiastes 3:14

Doubt is a very pervasive and destructive force. It is akin to a worm burrowing to the heart of the fruit, until the whole is spoiled. It is a sad thing to realize many Christians live much of their spiritual life overshadowed by doubt rather than joy. For a few moments I'd like to qualify this statement on two points: sincere believers who, because of doubt, live defeated lives; and those who have religious affectations and may experience occasional twinges of doubt.

I would speak first to those dear souls who wrestle in a seemingly endless cycle of doubt and discouragement, followed by a self-generated sense of false spiritual well being which experience has shown will not last. If these poor souls ever dare to broach the subject with their sincere and well meaning brethren, they are all too often inundated with clichés: “1% doubtful is 100% lost” and other such imbecilic and unscriptural statements. Our Savior never dealt so inconsiderately, nor yet so harshly with anyone, except the self-righteous. Thankfully we entreat with a gracious Savior and long-suffering God! We are told in Matthew 12:20 “*a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoking flax he will not quench...*”; Also in Hebrews 4:15 “*for we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities...*”. These and other such verses speak to the compassion of Christ in His dealings with His people. Remember the doubtful father of the demoniac son, “*Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief*”. Christ did not send him on his way with witty euphemisms.

The doubtful are told “remember the time when you asked Jesus into your heart”, “take that old devil back to the place where you fell on your knees and prayed” or “remind old Satan of the day when you asked God to save you”. These statements and others of their type expose the error of this prevalent modern day gospel. What you did, where you did it, when you did it; all the focus is on the individual rather than God! The most disconcerting thought is that there aren't more people in doubt.

I would like to help shift your focus to what the Holy Spirit through God's Word teaches us is the basis of salvation. Consider these few points for your comfort:

1. The person of Christ and His singularity- He is the only begotten Son of the Father: He is God residing in a body. Colossians tells us “*He is the image of the invisible God*” and “*in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*”. Consider also the Father's own testimony concerning Christ in Matthew, “*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him*”. Consider also His sinless life of absolute obedience to the Father and complete fulfillment of the Law which condemned us and that He was “*declared to be the Son of God with power when God raised Him from the dead*”.

2. The work of Christ and its sufficiency- the penal (legal) substitutionary death of Christ for sinners who believe on Him. His death which fully satisfies the Divine justice of God, thereby allowing God to justify sinners *"To declare, I say at this time His (Christ's) righteousness: that He (God) might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth on Jesus"*. Further consider His resurrection which validates His claim, power, position, and the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice for sinners. His propitiatory (appeasing and therefore turning away God's wrath, having endured it Himself) work is complete *"But this man(Christ), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;".* He is actively saving sinners without any constraint or hindrance! Hebrews also states *"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them"*.
3. Also consider that salvation rests not only on the sinless person and completed work of Christ, but also unequivocally on God's faithfulness to His word and glory. It is His Spirit saving sinners by His power *"being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (continue to do) it until the day of Jesus Christ"*.

The scriptures show us that salvation is not an experience or dependent on us, but is the grace of God working with effectual power. It's not that I was saved back when I did something, but moment by moment am being saved and kept by the power of God, with my faith placed in Christ's righteousness in my place. It is His Spirit who reveals this truth of my sinfulness and God's grace in treating with undeserving sinners in His Son Jesus Christ. Oh blessed day when the Holy Spirit opened my eyes to this truth as the ground for my confidence. With this realization and reliance upon God's faithfulness, Christ's satisfaction, and the Spirit's power comes a rest from my own labor to satisfy God along with comfort and peace. Observe all God has done to bring salvation to you, and draw all your comfort from these depths of God's grace. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:1-2). From this well draw out peace and assurance as oft as you have need of it! *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"*.

Now I would speak to those who harbor religious affectations. Those who think to better themselves by their own efforts, and by their own morality seek to find acceptability with God I only offer one point of comfort; be glad for the stirring of doubt within your breast! You dare not rely on yourself for righteousness before God. Flee to Christ immediately and plead earnestly for forgiveness of sin and for His righteousness on your behalf; for *"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble"*. As long as you are assailed by doubt there is hope you will repent and turn to Christ alone for your hope of salvation.

Do you trust and hope in something you are doing or have done for salvation; or do you trust only in Christ for your standing before God?

May the Lord bless your meditations on these words.

Pastor J